WOMEN IN INDUSTRY.

UNDER the heading of "Women in Industry" I have been asked to give information to-night* as to "the extent of Woman labour, and its effect upon Industry generally and upon the Women themselves."

Definition of Industry

The term Industry must be taken by my audience in its modern technical use, which excludes from its application all production and preparation of goods for consumption solely in the home, and all services in any home, even in that of a stranger, which are entirely directed to increasing the comfort and well-being of the members of the family.

The term includes all industry directed to supplying the demand of any market in which exchange of goods takes place.

But these two groups do not cover the whole field of women's activities. Besides home duties and family service there is a third group of services, performed by women in establishments carried on, in many cases, for the sake of profit, such as schools and nursing homes, or for the public welfare, such as asylums, hospitals, and workhouses. The term Institution Service sufficiently describes this class of employment; and service in residential houses for shop assistants, or in the kitchens and dining-rooms of businesss firms, providing meals for their work-people, may come under this heading. I should also include here the domestic servant (not the mistress) in lodging houses and hotels. But I should exclude from it waitresses and barmaids, who, in the main, are employed in performing the last operation required in the exchange of goods, and should therefore class them as industrially employed, as well as shop assistants, cashiers and commercial clerks.

If under another group, which we may describe as "Other Personal Service," we include those employed in professions and recreative arts, such as dancing, singing and acting, we shall have almost covered the ground.

* To the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Economic Society on the 22nd February, 1911.

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We have therefore to consider women as being engaged in :

1. Home Duties only.
2. Family Service.
3. Institution Service.
4. Other Personal Service.
5. Industries.

We shall not always be able to separate statistically persons engaged in one kind of service from persons engaged in another kind. But, historically, we may be able to watch the movement of the majority of one group into some other group.

Occupations in 1901

The first question then is the present extent of the employment of women in industries, as compared with their employment as home makers or in service.

Our most recent returns are for 1901, and these are quite good enough for my present purpose, which is not to watch the fluctuations from decade to decade, but to endeavour to discover what nature has authorised English women to do, by watching what they have been doing during the centuries of their history.

At the end of the nineteenth century the census shows that in England and Wales 32 per cent. of women and girls of 10 years and upwards were returned as occupied in other than home duties.

Of the 32 per cent. occupied 14 were engaged in family, institution or other personal service, and 18 in industries.

Of those in industries nearly one-third were engaged in the manufacture of clothing, exactly one-fourth in the textile trades; commercial clerks, shopkeepers and shop assistants, laundresses, providers of board, lodging and drink account for more than one-fourth. The remaining miscellaneous industries only occupied 3 in every 100 women and girls over 10 years of age.

Fifty-two per cent. of the unmarried women and girls above 10 years of age were occupied in service or industries, and 13 per cent. of the married and widowed were thus occupied.

Before going further it is necessary to make clear a fact which does not appear to be universally known, *viz.*, the smallness of the leisured classes as compared with the whole population. These classes spread themselves over so large a proportion of the acreage of Great Britain that their numerical ratio is generally exaggerated. It will I think be admitted that families not waited on by domestic servants are not usually to be included in these classes. At the last census there were only eighteen female indoor domestic servants to every 100 families

or occupiers, and this does not mean that eighteen families in every 100 have a servant apiece. If we suppose that three-fifths of the families keeping servants have only one servant apiece, that one-fifth have two servants, and that the remaining fifth have an average of four servants, our hypothesis will not be far from the fact, and this gives as a result ten families or occupiers in every 100 as waited on by servants. The so-called leisured classes, therefore, certainly do not exceed 10 per cent. of the population of England and Wales. Most of us would be inclined to exclude also families keeping only one servant, but at any rate 10 per cent. is an outside estimate.

Coming back, therefore, to the question of the employment of married and unmarried women in service and industries, and remembering that 13 per cent. of the married and widowed are thus occupied, we find that, approximately, of wives and widows in 1901

10 per cent. may be regarded as assisted in their home duties, of whom probably few were breadwinners.

77 per cent. (at least) were engaged in home duties only, and had no assistance from servants.

13 per cent. were breadwinners, and in many, probably most cases, had home duties to perform without assistance from servants.

Of the 13 per cent. of married or widowed women who were bread-winners, 4 were engaged in family, institution or personal service, and 9 in industries. Manufacture of clothing and textiles, shopkeeping, boarding and lodging, dealing in alcoholic drink, and laundry work account for 8 of the 9 engaged in industries; miscellaneous occupations, of which farm work is the most important, account for the remaining 1 per cent.

It will be noted that with the exception of textile work the occupations of married and widowed women were in the main those for which home duties would to some extent prepare them.

Of the 52 per cent. of unmarried women and girls, 25 were engaged in family, institution or other personal service and 27 in industries. Of those in industries one-third were engaged in the manufacture of clothing, a little over one-fourth were workers in textiles. Shop-assistants, laundry workers, waitresses, barmaids, boarding and lodging-house keepers, inn-keepers and beer sellers, workers in paper, printing, bookbinding and stationery trades, commercial clerks and workers in food, account for another third and leave only 2½ in every 100 women and girls over 10 years of age to be assigned to other trades.

Eighty per cent. of the occupied unmarried women and girls were between the ages of 15 and 35.

Now we are asked to consider what effect the employment of women in industry has on industry itself. Such a question seems to suggest that women have at some period entered industries which were previously carried on without their aid, and before attempting to answer it we must first see what has been happening in this respect, and, if such a revolution has occurred, to endeavour to ascertain its date.

Changes since 1851

There is no statistical material of any value further back than the Census of 1851, but, recent as is its date, we may find it useful towards a judgment of the direction in which we have been moving during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Comparative statistics, it must be remembered, are full of pitfalls. The Census has two functions. It should enable us to compare one decade with the previous one but it should also adapt itself to new conditions so as to give us positive information as to the present. It must in fact move with the times, although it must move slowly. This involves difference of classification in two distant periods.

Take for example the classification of teachers in 1851 and 1901. In 1851 "music teachers" were included under this heading and not under "musicians," and this no doubt was correct. But the nation has grown more musical and in 1901 it is assumed that to be a teacher of music a person must be a musician, and the music mistress is no longer included in the teaching group.

The "nursery governess" is not specifically mentioned in either Census. In the Census of 1901 we know as a fact that she is included, along with lady nurses, among indoor domestic servants. But was this the practice in 1851? In those days, when the majority of private governesses had hardly any education, would any line have been drawn between one kind of governess or another? I think not.

Now these are merely two instances, among several hundreds, of details which must be carefully watched when we attempt comparisons over any long period of time. Positive error is of much less importance than comparative error, for the former may be truth compared with our own muddled or erroneous conceptions. But when we use statistical comparisons, in order to draw conclusions as to tendencies in one direction or another, we must have a heavy weight down on one side, when dealing

with figures fifty years apart, before venturing to form a judgment. Otherwise we may be deceived into calling a backward movement a forward one, because of a slight overbalancing in one direction caused by an unobserved transfer from one group to another.

With this caution well in mind we must examine the 1851 census figures. The General Report contains an error which must be corrected at the outset. By a slip it has included amongst the occupied all persons described as "gentlewomen, annuitants and of independent means," and also all "of no stated occupation described as pensioners, paupers, lunatics, prisoners, or vagrants," as well as land or house owners. As we have no means of guessing what proportion of these women were unmarried we have to make estimates, which are of course liable to error. By this means we reduce the percentage of occupied wives and widows in 1851 from 31, as given by the Report itself, to 25.

But we must not assert that in 1851 there were 25 per cent. of wives and widows occupied compared with 13 per cent. in 1901, for we come across another difficulty. This 25 per cent. includes all farmers' wives not otherwise described. It was assumed in 1851 that all farmers' wives, and all female relatives above 15 years of age living in the same dwelling as the farmer, were engaged in superintendence of farm work, or in actual farm work. Incidentally they performed ordinary home duties, but very frequently they only performed those home duties which were thrown in with farm work such as cooking for the farm servants and preparing food, milking cows, rearing poultry, etc., for the market, while employing nurses and governesses and needlewomen to do what other wives in a corresponding social scale would have done themselves.

We do not now assume that a farmer's wife takes an active part in farm work and management, and the group of farmers' daughters and near female relatives who specifically stated that they assisted in farm work in 1901 was very small. In 1851 there were 165,000 farmers' wives and 105,000 farmers' daughters or near relatives included amongst the occupied. In 1901 less than 19,000 daughters and near relatives specifically returned themselves as assisting in farm work, and farmers' wives assisting their husbands have not been classified (*i.e.*, they have been included amongst those with no occupation other than home duties).

Now if we subtract—as we must—the farmers' wives from

the occupied in 1851, in order to bring the comparison into line with 1901, we exclude a large number of the women most busily and usefully engaged in the farming industry. We have no means of ascertaining whether the majority of farmers' wives at the present day are or are not also engaged in the farming industry. The number of holders of farms has not materially declined during the half century, aud therefore the number of farmers' wives may be assumed to have only slightly declined. But even if the modern farmer's wife takes a part in farm management and work, her share in it must have greatly decreased when we consider that the number of agricultural labourers and farm servants has declined since 1851 from nearly 1¼ million men and boys to less than ¾ of a million, aud from 143,000 women and girls to 12,000.

Subtracting the farmers' wives in 1851 from the occupied group we bring our figure of 25 per cent. of occupied wives and widows down to 21 per cent.

Next we find that in 1851 a shoemaker's wife was assumed to be assisting her husband in shoemaking, and 81,000 shoemakers' wives were included in the occupied group. Now although this again presents a statistical difficulty it is very valuable evidence of the fact that when the shoemaking industry was entirely a home industry the wife was accustomed to help her husband in his workshop. The industry has been revolutionised eutirely since 1851, and the great majority of the men have been obliged to abandon the domestic workshop for the factory or for the employer's workshop. The shoemaker's wife, if she needs industrial employment, must seek it on her own behalf.

In excluding this large class from our occupied groups, we are excluding persons who probably were industrially occupied in 1851, whereas at the present time shoemakers' wives with no specified occupation are rightly excluded from the occupied group. Its exclusiou reduces the 21 per cent. to 19 per cent.

Inn-keepers' wives, shopkeepers' wives, butchers' wives, publicans' wives, must also be subtracted from the 1851 group to bring it into line with 1901, although again it must be remembered that, in all probability, a much larger proportion of them were actually engaged in their husband's industry than at the present time, and in addition that all returned as helping their husbands in this group are classified as occupied in the 1901 Census.

We thus come down to a final figure of 17 per cent. of wives

and widows engaged in service or industry in 1851 as compared with 13 per cent. in 1901. And I think we are justified in concluding that during the latter half of the nineteenth century there was a considerable decline in the proportion of wives and widows who were engaged in service or industry.

Amongst the causes of this change must be included the movement of several men's industries from the domestic workshop to the factory or the employer's workshop and the increase in earnings of the skilled artisan.

Turning to the employment of unmarried women and girls, I must not take up time in showing the method of calculation. The comparison finally shows a decline in the proportion of girls employed under 15 years of age, an increase in the proportion between 15 and 25 years of age, and a decline in the proportion employed above 25 years of age.

The net result of the comparison between the two periods is a decline in the proportion of women and girls employed both in service and in industry.

In the half-century there has been no real invasion of industry generally by women, but rather a withdrawal from it. There has been a movement from family service to institution service, as in the case of the teachers, who are now, to a large extent, engaged in schools and very little in families. The proportion of domestic indoor servants has declined but it must be remembered that far more household work was required in 1851, when washing was largely done at home and servants were expected to do plain sewing in their spare time. Children are generally at school instead of being at home with a governess during school hours. The mistress of the house spends much less time in the making of clothing, so that her need of domestic assistance is considerably lessened, sick nursing is much more skilled and the hospitals are more efficient.

Turning to industry we find a smaller proportion of women engaged in the cotton industry, and a great decline in the proportion engaged in the woollen, worsted and silk industries. The female agricultural labourers and servants engaged in farm work have declined from 20 per 1,000 living above 10 years of age to less than 1 per 1,000. And even the clothing industries employ a smaller proportion of women because the plain needlewoman casually employed has to a great extent been replaced by a smaller proportion of full-time workers in clothing factories and workshops.

We must move further back therefore to find the date when women were only expected to be home makers, not bread winners.

Pre-Factory Days

Let us go to pre-factory days and take the period beginning with 1660. In the literature of this period I cannot find a trace or hint of any theory that women in any class, not of gentle birth, should not be called upon to add to the family income in addition to performing home duties; and I find much evidence of its being universally expected of them.

An analysis of the population made by Gregory King in 1696 gives us some idea of the percentage of families belonging to the classes in which the wives and daughters would not be expected to take up industrial employment or go into service. We may compare it with the 10 per cent. of occupiers waited on by servants at the present time.

Gregory King estimates the population at 5½ million and the number of families at 1,360,000. He begins his census with the 160 temporal lords and enumerates separately the spiritual lords, baronets, knights, esquires and gentlemen. These amount to slightly more than 1 per cent. of the families. Then come "persons in offices," merchants and traders by sea and merchants and traders by land, persons in the law, clergymen, naval officers and military officers, amounting to 49,000 or 3·6 per cent.

This gives the entire group of classes in which the women folk were not expected to contribute by their labour to the family income, or to take a situation as governess or waiting woman in some other household.

The freeholders not included among the esquires or gentlemen and the farmers together account for 24·2 per cent. of the families; shopkeepers, traders, artisans and handicraftsmen, and persons in science and liberal arts account for only 8½ per cent.; and then we have the families of common seamen, common soldiers, labouring people and out-servants, cottagers and paupers amounting to 62½ per cent.

In Sir William Petty's *Political Arithmetick*, printed in 1690, and written, according to his son's statement, "long before"—probably early in the reign of Charles II.—we find some curious estimates. We are told that "about one-fourth of the mass of mankind are children under 7 years old, from whom little labour is to be expected." . . . "About another tenth part of the whole people are such as by reason of their great estates,

titles, dignities, offices and professions are exempt from that kind of labour we now speak of; their business being, or ought to be, to govern, regulate, and direct the labours and actions of others. So that of 10 millions there may be about 6½ millions which (if need require) might actually labour; and of those some might earn 3*s*. per week, some 5*s*., and some 7*s*., *i.e.*, all of them might earn 5*s*. per week at a medium one with another."

This estimate supposes that all women and girls over 7 years of age are to labour except amongst the upper tenth.

~~Again~~ Sir William Petty quotes the Author of *The State of England* as saying that "the children of Norwich between 6 and 16 years old do earn £12,000 per annum more than they spend." He then proceeds to do a direct proportion sum on this Norwich basis for England, Scotland and Ireland, concluding that: "Forasmuch as the number of people above 16 years old are double the number between 6 and 16; and that each of the men can earn double to each of the children; it is plain that if the men and children everywhere did as they do in Norwich they might earn £25,000,000 more than they spend." The context proves that Petty here uses men as equivalent to people above 16 and that women are included. There is no suggestion that they should not labour equally with the men.

The monotonous work of hand spinning, which could be performed by the most unskilled and unintelligent, and was imposed in the workhouses on those who could do nothing else, occupied the place which in early Victorian days belonged to the more skilled occupation of plain needlework as a means of livelihood. It appears to have been the principal item of education in the elementary schools together with the more interesting art of knitting. In the farms in England the mistress and her daughters, and the women servants also, filled up any intervals in the farm and house work by knitting and spinning, and the yarn or thread spun was sent out to be woven by weavers and returned to the farm, where it had been spun, ready for use in the home. But the wives and children of the agricultural and farm labourers knitted and spun for wages, and the accounts given by Defoe in his *Tour through Great Britain*, and by Arthur Young in his *Rides*, make it unmistakably clear that the great mass of women and children were employed in their homes in working for the market, and no pity is ever accorded them on this account.

"The whole county of Essex," says Defoe, "large as it is,

may be said to be employed and in part maintained by the spinning of wool for the bay trade of Colchester and its adjacent villages. At Ipswich the poor people are employed in spinning wool for other towns where manufacturers are settled." "The manufacture of knitted stockings employs the great part of the county of Dorset." "In Worcestershire, Stourbridge and the country round is employed in the manufacture of stockings." At Taunton he was told by a manufacturer, that there was not a child in the town or in the villages round it of above five years old but, "if it was not neglected by its parents and untaught, could earn its own bread." The centres of the cloth trade in Somerset, Wilts, Dorset, and Gloucestershire are enumerated and he adds: "These towns as they stand thin and at considerable distance from one another, are interspersed with a very great number of villages, hamlets and scattered houses; in which, generally speaking, the spinning work of all this manufacture is performed by the poor people; the master clothiers, who generally live in the greater towns, sending out the wool weekly to their houses by their servants and horses; and at the same time bringing back the yarn which they have spun and finished, which then is fitted for the loom."

He notes that at Witney: "there are at work 150 looms continually, for which above 3,000 people from 8 years old and upwards are daily employed in carding, spinning, etc."

At Stockport, "poverty is not much felt except by those who are idle, for all persons capable of tying knots may find work in the silk mills, which employ near 1,000 persons and where children of six years old are taught to earn one shilling per week and receive more as they grow capable of deserving it."

At Halifax, "every clothier must keep one horse at least to fetch home his wool and his provisions from the market, to carry his yarn to the spinners, his manufacture to the Fulling mill, and when finished to the market to be sold, and the like. . . Though we met few people without doors, yet within we saw the houses full of lusty fellows, some at the dye-vat, some at the loom, others dressing the cloths; the women and children carding and spinning; all employed from the youngest to the oldest; scarce anything above four years old but its hands were sufficient for its own support."

"In Richmond (Yorks.), thrives a kind of manufactory of knit yarn stockings for servants and ordinary people. Every

family is so employed that way, both great and small. . . . This trade extends from Westmorland hither."

Time does not permit me to give further instances of the fact that when England was mainly rural the great mass of its female population in rural districts were industrially occupied, the farmers' wives and daughters at the top of the scale being busily engaged in the work of the farm (including the feeding of many of the farm servants) and sending or taking produce to the market, the labourers' wives and children working continually at spinning or knitting or lace-making, when not engaged in actual farm labouring occupations.

In the towns the wives and daughters of artisans and small tradespeople were busily occupied, but here I am obliged to take for evidence slight indications shown in the literature of the eighteenth century too numerous to quote and in each case of too casual a nature to be considered as proof. The contemptuous attitude of the upper classes, in early Victorian days, towards the wives of farmers or of tradesmen, who did not personally assist their husbands in their business, and towards their daughters, if they stayed at home without industrial employment instead of taking a situation, shows how very modern is the notion that women in any class except that of the nobility and gentry should confine themselves to home making.

Go further back and in Dr. Annie Abram's *Social England in the Fifteenth Century* you will find ample evidence of the industrial employment of married women and others in many industries of a skilled nature. Indeed, in this century there are indications that they occupied a position in business affairs which was lost in later centuries, probably because idleness was not then a sign of gentility, as it afterwards became, and girls were apprenticed to their work with the intention of continuing it after marriage.

What then has happened during the nineteenth century?

So far as nine-tenths of the female population are concerned the important changes may be briefly stated:

Women Wage Earners now Wage Receivers

1. At the beginning of the nineteenth century 70 per cent. of the population lived in "villages and detached dwellings of the country"; at the end of it, only 23 per cent.

2. The change from the small scale system of industry to the large scale system has put an end to the domestic system under which the small master received the help of his wife and children. Men and women alike have had to

leave the home workshop and seek industrial employment elsewhere.

3. Under the domestic industrial system the husband received the payment for the work done by himself and his family. Under the modern system wives and daughters receive the wages they have earned.

4. Lastly, and within the memory of many of us, wives have been accorded the legal right to retain their wages, instead of being compelled to hand them over to their husbands on demand.

There has been, in fact, a revolution imperceptibly achieved by economic forces in the relations of working women to their husbands and fathers. They have become independent wage receivers. They have invaded no industries hitherto confined to men, and they have abandoned occupations wholly unsuitable to women in which they were formerly employed. They no longer do the work of beasts of burden in coal mines, or climb ladders or crawl over roofs as bricklayers' or tilers' labourers. Girls under 18 years of age, who had to be women in the eighteenth century, are now protected young persons.

And as working women have grown more independent, an idea is beginning to spread that the bearing and rearing of children and the making of a home are a sufficient strain upon a wife and that she should not be called upon to be a breadwinner also.

This is an entirely modern theory.

Women in the Governing Classes

And now with regard to the women in the ranks of the upper 10 per cent. How do they stand in relation to industry?

Anyone who will carefully study the history of English-women in the past will be driven to admit that the English lady had a much wider field of action in former days than she has yet succeeded in regaining and that it will be many years before she wins back the honourable position she once occupied.

The period from 1660 to 1760 is the darkest in her history. Never before were girls in the upper classes so neglected or wome n more despised. From the seventh to the sixteenth century, ladies of high rank in England lived in social groups, either in large households or in monastic settlements of women under vows of celibacy. Broadly speaking, we find two types of strong women of gentle birth represented more or less in English history.

One type is closely allied to the ideal of the virtuous matron in *Proverbs*. Let me remind you of that lady's industrial functions. "She worketh wool and flax; . . . she is like the merchant-ships: she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and their task to her maidens. She considereth a field and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. . . . . She perceiveth that her merchandise is profitable. . . . . She maketh for herself carpets of tapestry. She maketh linen garments and selleth them; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant." You will remember that the chapter ends with an appeal to the reader, presumably if he has the good fortune to be the husband of so admirable a woman, "to give her of the fruit of her hands," *i.e.*, to let her have a share of her own earnings.

The mediæval English châtelaine was frequently called upon to perform exactly the same industrial functions as her Jewish prototype. Indeed, in days when the barons, knights and squires were continually abroad on fighting expeditions, much greater responsibilities than these fell upon their wives in England, and the willingness of the Anglo-Norman knights to embark on these enterprises is an indication of the capacity and loyalty of the ladies left in charge. We have not many historical records of their daily life, but such glimpses as are obtainable leave an impression of remarkable business energy and character, frequently combined with military gifts of a high order. On a smaller scale the wives of the country gentlemen seem to have been very efficient as deputies in the absence of their husbands. Anglo-Saxon and Norman-French ladies were probably equally competent in the direction of the huge households of mediæval days when, as Miss Bateson tells us, "every great household was thronged with young men in every stage of ripeness for the knightly degree, learning manners and defending the honour of the lord at whose cost they lived, in the field of tournament or battle."

But the maintenance of discipline in such households would have been impossible had there not existed at the same time the monastic settlements for women, to which girls of noble birth could be sent for education and where women of mature years could find a haven of refuge from their stormy and quarrelsome menfolk.

It is in the history of these monastic settlements for women

that we find evidence of the dominance in the Anglo-Saxon race of a second type of woman, corresponding most closely to the Wise Women, honoured as priestesses or goddesses by the Germanic tribes in pre-Christian times.

Miss Lina Eckenstein, in her most valuable work on *Woman under Monasticism*, quotes Jacob Grimm's description of the characteristic traits of the German goddesses. "They are conceived," he says, "essentially as divine mothers, travelling about and visiting mortals, from whom mankind learn the ways and arts of housekeeping and tilth: spinning, weaving, guarding the hearth, sowing and reaping."

The Wise Women, who won for themselves the respect and honour accorded so frequently to them by the chiefs of German tribes, seem to have been peculiarly unsusceptible to masculine intellectual influence and to have had the power of impressing both men and women with the rightness of their independent judgment. Refusing to submit to the conventional family ties, their influence nevertheless seems to have been recognised by the tribes as essentially good and helpful to the community and not to have been confused with the lawlessness of the selfish and sensual woman. The Wise Women obeyed wider laws than those of the family and taught them to the community.

"In the large number of convents as well as in the names of female saints among the Anglo-Saxons," says another German historian, "we may recognise the same spirit which attracted the notice of the Roman army among the ancient Germans, and was manifested in the esteem and honour of women generally, and in the special influence exercised by the priestess."

Miss Eckenstein tells us that:

"Most of the women who were honoured as saints in England belong to the first hundred years after the acceptance of Christianity in these islands. A few other women have been revered as saints who lived in the tenth century and came under the influence of the monastic revival which is associated with the name of Dunstan. But no woman living during Anglo-Norman times has been thus honoured, for the desire to raise women to saintship was essentially Anglo-Saxon and was strongest in the times which immediately followed the acceptance of Christianity."

"A great proportion of the women who founded religious houses in the seventh century"—(and in Anglo-Saxon days the initiative invariably came from women)—"were members of ruling families. It was usual for a princess to receive a grant of land from her husband on the occasion of her marriage and this land, together with what she inherited from her father, she could dispose of at will. She often devoted this property to founding a religious house, where she established her daughters and to which she retired either during her husband's lifetime or after his death. The great honour paid by Christianity to the celibate life and the wide field of

action opened to a princess in a religious house were strong inducements to the sisters and daughters of kings to take the veil."

Although St. Hilda's reign at Whitby was so eminently successful and that of her successor Elfleda seems to have been equally respected, settlement life in Northumbria and Mercia was unable to withstand the lawless assaults of the heathen Danes, who from the ninth century onward were continually making incursions from the east coast. But in the south of England the influence of the religious settlements was permanent and in two or three important Anglo-Saxon houses it was uninterrupted for close on nine hundred years. After the Conquest several hundred convents were founded.

In Anglo-Saxon England several men who attained to distinction received their training in settlements governed by women. The convents were important educational centres and the nuns during their leisure hours cultivated art in several of its branches. Spinning and weaving were necessarily practised in all settlements during many centuries, for the inmates of these establishments made the clothes which they wore. But weaving and embroidery found a new development in the convent and works of marked excellence were produced. Miss Eckenstein quotes from Prof. Middleton the statement that England during the thirteenth century far surpassed the rest of the world in the art of embroidering delicate pictures in silk, especially for ecclesiastical vestments. Pope Innocent IV., in 1246, was so much impressed by the splendour of the vestments of the English clergy that he sent letters to the abbots of the Cistercian houses in England ordering them to forward to him gold embroidery of this kind. They obtained it (Matthew Paris tells us) from London merchants, and this fact suggests that the nuns worked not merely for themselves and their friends, but, as at the present time, for an organised market.

In Anglo-Saxon times women in convents were in free communication with the world around them. The convents founded after the Norman Conquest were for the most part founded by men, and in nearly all cases were controlled by prioresses, themselves subordinate to abbots or bishops, instead of by abbesses on an equal footing, within their own domain, with abbots or bishops as in Anglo-Saxon days, and they became more and more secluded from secular life. But the more restricted their intercourse with the outer world the greater would appear to have been their attention to industrial employment.

The rise of the secular university weakened educational influence and development in men's monasteries and the nuns suffered to a still greater extent. Hitherto they had shared to the full in the intellectual life of their times; but women were entirely excluded from the secular university. The nuns ceased to be in touch with the needs of a secular life; and as schools of training for girls of high rank destined for married life, the convents were steadily losing ground in the century before the dissolution of the monasteries. For all that, their closure left English ladies with no chance at all of receiving methodical training, or of exercising their great natural talents as directors of institutions carrying on public work such as hospitals and schools, or of apprenticeship to industrial arts requiring skill and taste.

The large household became the only school of manners and arts; but even that disappeared in the troubles of the Civil War, which separated members of families from each other and sent now one side and now another into exile. After the Restoration the English girls of the upper classes had fewer opportunities for broad education and training than at any previous period in English history since the introduction of Christianity.

The Anglo-Saxon Wise Women and soothsayers were as plentiful as ever during this dark century which followed the Restoration, but we must look to old family letters and journals in order to discover them. They had their widest scope in the Nonconformist communities, amongst the Independents, the Quakers and the Wesleyans, especially in the trading and skilled handicraft classes. Mary Astell, born in the reign of Charles II., the daughter of a Newcastle merchant, nearly succeeded in obtaining episcopal sanction for the establishment of an Anglican Women's College, but the dread of any approximation to Papist institutions compelled Bishop Burnet to withdraw his approval and it was not until a century and a half later—in 1845—that the first Anglican sisterhood was established. But since 1760 to the present time the Wise Women have been steadily leading the way up paths of progress. Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, Elizabeth Fry, Harriet Martineau, Charlotte Brontë, Mary Carpenter, George Eliot, Florence Nightingale, Frances Buss, Dorothea Beale, Anne Clough, Elizabeth Blackwell and a host of others have secured for the nation at the present time

the services of large numbers of trained teachers, trained doctors and nurses and trained social workers. Industry alone at the present time has been left unaided (except from the outside) by the co-operation of the inspired Wise Women.

In the large convent and in the large feudal household there was in all probability subdivision of labour combined with frequent change of occupation; only women of mature years and of high skill would have been allowed to specialise and concentrate on one branch. In the convent the arts pursued were all directed to the sanctification of the worker and to the glory of God. In the feudal household its members were co-operating in the production of useful or beautiful things which all might enjoy. They were members of a busy community, coming into close contact with men and women of all classes.

The cottage or small workshop industry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries where women, isolated from each other, were engaged on some single monotonous and usually unskilled process, was a poor exchange. The factory system, intensifying one-sided specialisation, has, nevertheless, brought with it the remedy for the many evils of its industrial life, for, in conjunction with the public elementary schools, the congregation of large numbers of women and girls in a common industrial life has revived again their desire and faculty for association for public progress.

Summary of Conclusions

The aim of my paper has been to suggest that the great mass of Englishwomen, at all periods of their history, have had to take their full share in the struggle for life; that they have always had to be breadwinners as well as bread preparers; that they take no greater part in industry than they have always done; that at the present time they are almost entirely engaged in those industries for which women, in all races, at all times, have shown special aptitude, such as the manufacture of cloth, the making of clothes, the preparing of food, the copying of manuscripts; that in previous centuries they co-operated with men in heavy industries in which they are now hardly ever employed; that in times when war, famine and pestilence frequently deprived them of husband or father they did men's work unaided.

I have also suggested that in later centuries they have been greatly handicapped by want of training and that the nineteenth century has been marked, not by any demand on the part of women to enter men's industries, but by a desire to remove the

handicap imposed on them by lack of education, and to give them a chance of being trained for the more skilled, lighter and better paid branches of the industries which were formerly more open to them than in recent days.

I would suggest that the effect of women's employment in these industries, which have everywhere been assigned in great part to women, can hardly be discussed. The question of interest is rather the effect on such industries of the displacement of women by men.

I have left untouched the final question as to the effect of industrial employment on women.

I have suggested that such employment may in the future decline as the importance of the work of bringing up children to be good and happy citizens is more and more recognised. Historians have so completely ignored women's interests in their researches that I cannot venture to form any opinion as to whether the lot of women was harder or more enjoyable in past centuries than at the present time.

At the present day industrial employment claims the unmarried women and girls more than the married and its conditions are far from satisfactory. The material disadvantages are too obvious to need comment. But I would venture to suggest that reformers concentrate too much attention, comparatively speaking, on certain external accidents of industrial life, and too little on the mental and moral effect produced on the girl by having to spend all her days and weeks and years on work which neither in itself nor in its purpose can arouse delight or satisfaction. It matters little to women whether they are employed in industry or in service, at home or abroad, provided they can feel they are helping to make life more beautiful or more worth living. Industries should be subordinated to human beings, not human beings to industries.

C. E. C.